

# Teaching Philosophy Sample

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I believe that students will excel at learning when they are held to high, yet achievable expectations, are active participants in the learning process, and feel as if they are part of a learning community. It is my role, as instructor, to create an environment of respect and concern for one another. Different points of view should not only be valued, but encouraged. Students are able to learn most effectively when they are engaged with the material, challenged to think critically, and encouraged to become life-long learners.

Engagement is the key to student involvement and student learning. In order to engage the students, particularly in a writing class, it is often helpful to use popular culture as a starting point. This helps a diverse group of students to find a common ground. When students are able to relate to the material, barriers are removed. Another way to engage the students is to vary delivery in order to reach a variety of different learners. This can include everything from lectures, film clips, in-class readings, journals, impromptu essays, group activities, class discussions, debates, etc. These activities also reinforce the classroom community that is paramount to student learning.

Challenging the students to think critically also helps students to learn more effectively – not just in my class but in their other courses as well. I am willing to challenge my students to rise to the level of difficult material. For example, when discussing a complex topic, I'll often have my students begin with an exploratory journal to discover their initial reactions to the subject. Then, we might read an article or watch a film that explores the subject in greater depth. The students then may get into groups and answer some critical thinking questions, which we will then discuss as a class. I often will play the role of "devil's advocate" in these discussions in order for the students to find ways to support their opinions. The most rewarding moment for me as an instructor is when the students find themselves thinking in new ways.

Once the students are engaged with the material and are challenged to think critically, the most important thing an instructor can do is to encourage the students to become life-long learners. I encourage my students to continue learning about topics outside of class. I'll often have time during the first few minutes of a class, in which a student who has researched something we have discussed in class can share it. That way the students are rewarded for their curiosity and commitment.

While it is important that the student leave a course with a master of the subject matter, I believe that when students are encouraged to enjoy learning, the mastery will take care of itself. When a teacher demonstrates enthusiasm and excitement about learning, I find that the students tend to follow suit. Having the opportunity to share my love of learning with these students is the ultimate privilege.